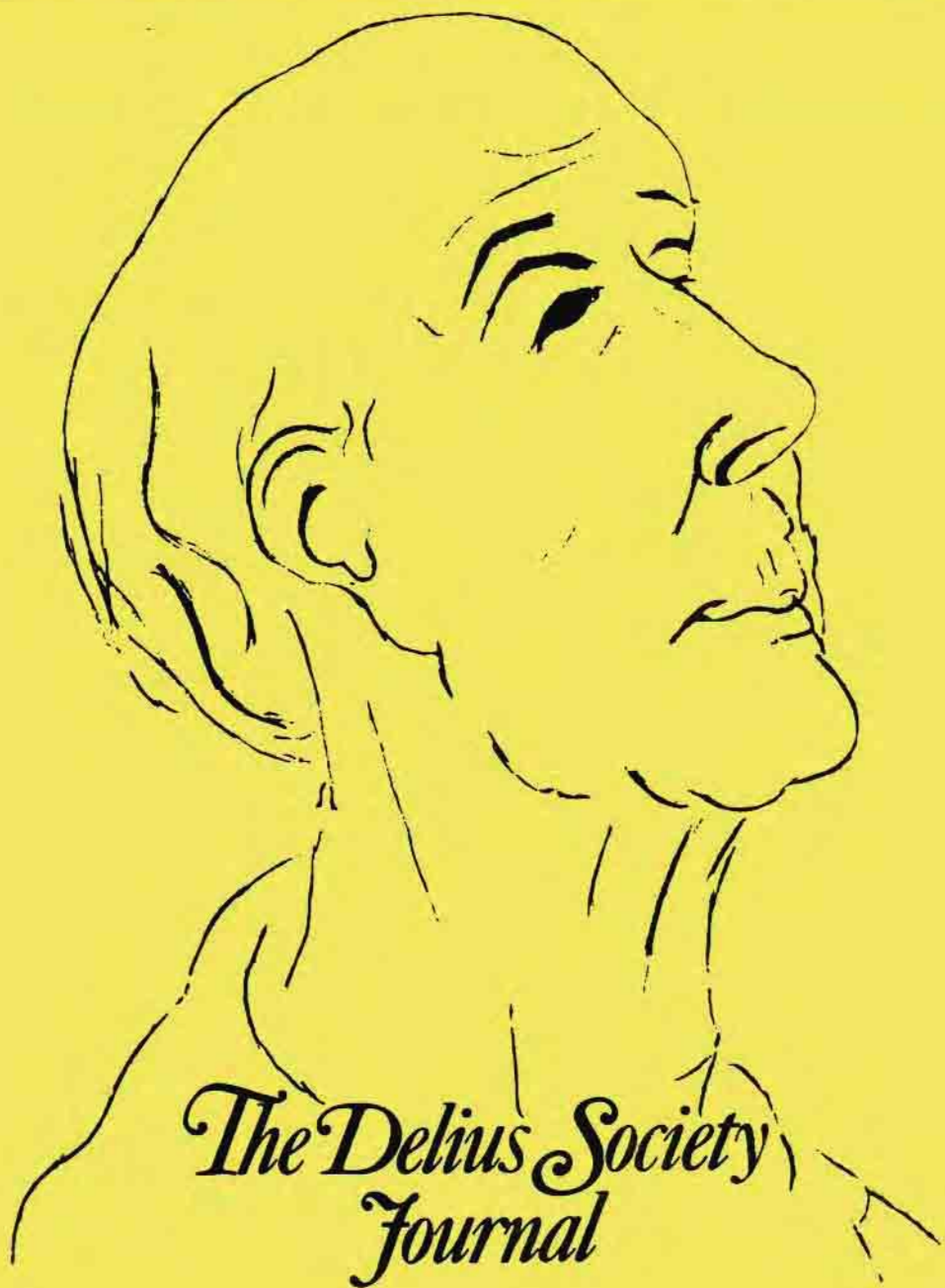

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The Delius Society

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The Delius Society
Journal

Contents

Editorial	3
Some Musical Recollections by Francis Russell	5
A Delius Recording Session by Leslie Bond	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Delius the Song-Writer	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Eric Fenby on Elgar	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	13
Balfour Gardiner Centenary Concert	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	14
Delius Society Meeting	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	15
Book Review	17
Advent Concert	18
For Sale	19
Correspondence	19
Forthcoming Events	19

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F Delius by Dawn Redwood (after Kapp)

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EDITORIAL

1978 began with a flurry of publicity for the music of Delius. In addition to the series of weekly broadcasts from the box of pre-war Beecham recordings which had begun before Christmas, *The Radio Times* billed no less than three Delius items in different programmes on 2nd January, the most important of which was a recording from last year's Malvern Festival of the 3rd Violin Sonata played by Yehudi Menuhin and Eric Fenby. On 31st December, Robert Henderson had devoted his weekly column in *The Daily Telegraph* to reviews of *A Delius Companion*, *Delius: A Life in Pictures* and *Delius: Portrait of a Cosmopolitan*. "If not yet in the concert hall, certainly in writing, Delius has once again become a minor growth industry", he wrote, and went on to applaud "the new generation of committed Delius scholars, Lionel Carley, Rachel Lowe, Christopher Palmer, Christopher Redwood and Robert Threlfall [who] have made it their task to probe and elucidate, as well as to correct numerous deeply entrenched misapprehensions." Most of all, I feel, Mr. Henderson deserves to be congratulated for having the courage to admit "my own ambiguous responses to Delius's music", a refreshing change from the vituperative rubbish which has so often been churned out by critics who are not sympathetic to this particular composer's music.

One last word: had Delius lived to read this newspaper he would have learned from the same issue that he was to share his Companion of Honour with trades union leader Mr. Jack Jones. I wonder what he would have had to say about that?

* * *

Only two weeks earlier *The Daily Telegraph's* Saturday music column, this time written by Martin Cooper, had been devoted to the little-known German composer Rudi Stephan, who was killed in Galicia at the beginning of the first world war, and therefore occupies a position comparable to our own George Butterworth. According to Mr. Cooper, Stephan was influenced by Delius, particularly the works which gave the latter his Rhineland successes in the early years of this century, *Koanga*, *Life's Dance*, *Paris*, *Appalachia* and *Sea Drift*, as well as by *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. As there are relatively few composers directly influenced by Delius, and I have never heard a note of Stephan's music, I would be very interested to hear from anyone who has.

* * *



I came across the above musical extract in a book of aural tests for Grade VIII candidates of the Royal Schools of Music examinations. It would be interesting to see how many members are able to identify the extract. As a clue, it can be stated that there are two known recordings of the work in question, each conducted by a Vice-President of the Delius Society. No doubt one of them will be the first person on the telephone with the answer!

In my last Editorial I omitted to mention our "spot the deliberate mistake competition". This was, of course, the picture of Market Street, Bradford, which was printed in reverse. Several members wrote pointing out that the carriages appeared to be driven continental-style! Whilst on the subject of errors, I should mention a mistake on page 17 of *Journal* No. 57, ten lines from the foot of the page. Mr. Lovgreen originally wrote "over one thousand orchestral *concerts*", which alters the meaning somewhat.

* * *

Mr. Lovgreen writes in his letter that 1977 was the best year for numbers of performances of Delius works since he began keeping statistics in 1965. It was, however, not a good year for broadcasts of choral works, and as to the BBC Symphony Orchestra, which had given only eleven performances of ten works by Delius in ten years up to the end of 1974 (see *Journal* No. 46), it has only given three more performances in the succeeding three years:

20/5/75: *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*. (Conductor: Sir Charles Groves; recording of a public concert given ten days earlier in Tokyo).

20/9/75: *Eventyr*. (Conductor: Norman del Mar; last night of the Proms.)

11/9/76: *Sea Drift*. (Conductor: Sir Charles Groves; last night of the Proms.)

Once again we observe the sterling work done for Delius by Sir Charles Groves; promenaders should be converts by now!

We look forward to the advent of Gennadi Rozhdestvensky as chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and wonder whether we shall now have the performance of *A Mass of Life* which he promised

us several years ago. Mr. Lovgreen has also drawn my attention to an interview with Sir Georg Solti in *Music Now* on 2nd December in which he stated that he really must look into the music of Delius since Bartok had stated that he liked it.

* * *

In *Music Weekly* on 18th December, Michael Oliver favourably reviewed *Delius: A Life in Pictures*. He mentioned the work which Delius dedicated to his wife and prefaced with a quotation from Rosetti, and then went on to play an excerpt from *A Song of Summer*!

* * *

Mr. M. Dawney of 118 Colin Gardens, Colindale, London NW9 6ER has a copy of the souvenir programme of the 1962 Delius Centenary Festival at Bradford for sale at £2 including postage. Any member interested is advised to contact Mr. Dawney.

* * *

Mr. Frank Bayford of "Greys Laurel", 21 Canonbury Road, Enfield, Middlesex, a new member, is anxious for information about any house with a plaque which commemorates a composer; places of composers' burials; memorial plaques in churches or cathedrals; and plaques commemorating performances.

Some Musical Recollections

by Francis Russell

The tenor Francis Russell was born at Tongrefail ("Sound of the Anvil"), Glamorganshire, on December 12th, 1895. He worked in the coal mine from the ages of 12 to 24 years, and then sang for the Carl Rosa Opera Company on a three-year contract. After two years he asked for his release because he realised that technically he was not ready. He came back to London and, after some time there, borrowed £1,000 from various people and went to Milan, where he studied under Ernesto Caronna for three years. He was then given a Covent Garden contract to sing with Elizabeth Rethberg in *Madam Butterfly*. Unfortunately two days before his debut, he became ill with double pneumonia and was in bed for three months. His teacher, Caronna, had come to London especially for that performance and also Otto Kahn, who was the financial backer of the Metropolitan, New York. However, when he had recovered he sang at every prominent festival in Great Britain in the 20's and 30's.

Francis Russell now lives in South Africa, and the Editor is grateful to Mr. D. R. Scorgie of Johannesburg, to whom these recollections were dictated.

* * *

In 1929 I received a message from the Columbia Gramophone Company saying they would like me to sing the tenor rôle in the *Delius Mass of Life*. They said Delius would be there and it was to be a "Delius Festival". With regret I had to refuse because I had contracted with the Covent Garden Opera Company to sing for them, for the first time in English, the rôle of Prince Calaf in Puccini's *Turandot*. Nevertheless I was able to attend a few rehearsals and was immediately captivated by the beauty of this, to me, unknown work. A number of other singers also listened to Beecham in the audience and from that very moment I realised that here was a master who really knew the score. It was at this performance of the *Mass* that the late Ernest Newman wrote such a glowing account of Roy Henderson's interpretation. Immediately his reputation was made by this work.

First of all, we were really struck by the appearance of Delius himself. He looked and was an invalid. He never interfered with Sir Thomas and his interpretation. He only sat and listened. Unfortunately I could not get to the Queen's Hall for the actual performance because we had already started our tour in the Provinces (Covent Garden Opera Tour).

Turandot in this production was Odette de Foras, the Liu was Miss Noel-Edie — a very good Scots soprano, the baritone was Arthur Fear and the trio consisted of Octave Dua, Parry Jones and Billy Michael. Our conductor was that grand person, the late Sir John Barbirolli.

SOME PERFORMANCES OF "A MASS OF LIFE" AND THE FIRST LEEDS FESTIVAL.

Now came my opportunity to sing in October 1931 for the first time the tenor rôle in the *Mass of Life* under Sir Thomas Beecham at this festival. The other artists were William Stiles Allan, Muriel Brunskill and Keith Faulkner. Unfortunately, Faulkner developed a nasty cold and Mr. Henderson was called in to substitute. Unfortunately at this performance the usually very reliable Yorkshire choir fluffed their entry before the entry for the tenor and Sir Thomas also tried to bring me in. It was far too early but he said "Come on!" I retorted between my teeth "Shut up!" I had the vocal score and he, as usual, was conducting from memory. When that movement was finished the late W. H. Read, who was leader of the orchestra, said to me as I sat down, "You were right and T.B. was wrong". I said "I know", and held up my vocal score. We continued on with the work until the interval, when T.B. said, "Thanks very much, my dear fellow". I simply looked at

him and remained silent. But the beauty of this work struck me then and has remained with me, even at the age of 82, as fresh as ever. Here comes the tragedy — I heard the work done a few times by other conductors but nobody understood the depth of this great work like Sir Thomas Beecham.

Some two years later we did a performance at the Queen's Hall, rehearsing in the morning with the same soloists as at the Leeds Festival; we came to the section "Auf dem Bergen" and we had the incomparable playing of Leon Goossens (oboe) Robert Murchie (flute) and Jack Thurston (clarinet). We soloists sat and were enthralled by the sound produced by these players and by the artistry of Sir Thomas. In fact we could not talk. Here were the glorious flute, oboe and clarinet players giving of their very best. I have never experienced anything like this as at that particular concert. Sir Thomas understood the work; others, such as Malcolm Sargent, failed to do so. This was the finest performance of the *Mass* that I have ever heard.

Unfortunately Sir Thomas and I had a difference of opinion over certain things and I did not again sing the *Mass* for him until he had to have me at the Albert Hall in 1946. Sir Thomas, with his usual facility for changing artists, had substituted Redvers Llewellyn for Roy Henderson. I was not actually engaged for this performance and only because the late Frank Titterton was not musical enough to sing the work was I brought in. (Here I must say I extracted from the B.B.C. a contract which I had wanted for some time, viz. to sing for them a series of modern English song programmes.) As soon as I arrived at the morning rehearsal at the Maida Vale underground studios, I found my old female colleagues there and was naturally given a very warm greeting. T.B. with his usual aplomb greeted me also, but I remained very cool. We started the rehearsal and here I found Llewellyn foolishly singing loudly and giving all he had. I warned him, saying "He [Sir Thomas] will take all from you now, but if you do not succeed at the concert you will be ignored." Subsequently, as I had predicted, this is what actually happened. The baritone sang himself out; then said he'd caught a cold; whereas if only he had listened to my advice he would have been successful on the appropriate occasion — which was a Saturday afternoon in the Albert Hall in October 1946. Thank heaven it was one of my best performances and I was singled out by the press for my knowledge of this work. I take no credit for the latter, simply because I had been the regular tenor in earlier performances, and I was emotionally and vocally inside the part.

In the beginning of the following year I was offered a contract to sing in South Africa, where I remained for four and a half months. I returned home to London and at the end of the same year my telephone rang, and I was invited to accept a full year contract in Johannesburg.

I accepted and have never for one moment regretted my decision to remain here as a teacher of the great art of singing.

COVENT GARDEN 1935 PERFORMANCES OF "KOANGA".

This was still the time of my little tiff with Sir Thomas and therefore I was not in the cast, but this did not prevent me from attending rehearsals and the first night of the opera. Sir Thomas brought out by his genius such sounds that *he* drew from the orchestra alone, and are still alive in my memory. That made me forget who the vocalists were.

BARBIROLLI'S VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA.

John Barbirolli, as he was then, visited Johannesburg to lecture. He had been with the Covent Garden Opera Company to Rhodesia in 1953. Naturally, as very old friends, he dined with us at my flat, and through the night we discussed music and the various composers. He was not a Britten fan, but when we came to the word "Delius", he blossomed forth and in no uncertain words praised Sir Thomas Beecham for his interpretations of this great composer's work. "I cannot emulate him because there is only one T.B., and he knows his Delius better than any other musician I have known". He hummed various phrases from different works of Delius, and said, "We owe a great deal to Eric Fenby for a greater knowledge of this wonderful man". After discussing various composers he came back to Delius, and finally said "T.B. has such love for this wonderful man's music". Barbirolli himself had such a deep regard for Beecham's interpretations of the works of Delius, but of himself said finally "I cannot better T.B.'s renderings or interpretations".

Notes: (1) Sir Thomas Beecham.

Full of charm one moment, and acidity the next, but no other conductor I have met could bring out of music so much and with such inner depth. One moment on top of the world, the next down in despair but when he had the right orchestral players playing for him, he could bring out the musical sounds unequalled; all his personal moods were forgotten when he interpreted some of the glorious masters, and here Delius was foremost.

(2) Aubrey Brain.

We had done a recording session at St. James, Petit France, in 1929 and in the tube on the way home, I had as companion Aubrey Brain, the famous horn player. I extolled his playing to him and said I had never been so thrilled by the beauty of the French horn. He replied, "I have a son who is a far better player than I am". Alas! We all know what happened to that brilliant son.

"PARIS - The Song of a Great City"

A Delius Society Recording Session

by Leslie Bond

My first acquaintance with the music of Delius was not until my twenty-second year when Columbia issued *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* on L 2087 (20th December 1927), when the enchanting sonorities of that most moving composition enraptured my senses and made me the complete Delius convert. Nor has there ever been a performance of that work recorded or performed so wonderfully as Beecham conducted it on that memorable occasion. The nearest approach to it I suppose would be at the first Sadler's Wells production of *A Village Romeo and Juliet*. Then followed my first acquaintance with *Sea Drift*, which moves me the most of all Delius's music (the *Messe des Lebens* notwithstanding) at an RAH Concert, mainly orchestral, but at which Florence Austral sang, and which concluded with the *Sea Drift*. Austral's solo was Weber's *Ocean, Thou Mighty Monster*, and it has occurred to me ever since how incongruous was their juxtaposition in the programme! Weber's "Monster" and Delius's "Cradle"!

So it was that when at the end of 1933 it was announced from the new Abbey Road Studios that, given enough subscribers, special recordings under the baton of Sir Thomas Beecham would be made for subscribing members of a Delius Society, I elatedly sent my subscription and was invited to Abbey Road Studios to 'sit in' on that most memorable day, 9th April 1934.

Except for the preliminary buzz of conversation and tuning-up emanating from the orchestra there was little excitement in the studio that morning and only a handful of other subscribers was present for the first session which was to be *Paris - The Song of a Great City*. Even these few guests disappeared after a short while, so for the rest of the morning Sir Thomas and that famous London Philharmonic Orchestra (it was before the Royal Phil. was formed, vide the late lamented Victor Oloff's talk to the Society three or four years ago) were mine! And what a morning it was!

What an orchestra too! They were all there, Paul Beard leading, Aubrey Brain (the world famous father of the tragic Dennis Brain), the Goossens family — Marie, Sidonie and Leon, and the rest.

The orchestra's excitement did noticeably mount when after the cacophony of tuning had abated, the Maestro walked to the podium with his customary "good morning, gentlemen". There followed a discussion with Lawrance Collingwood who was in charge of the session, and a few cryptic remarks to his friends, the orchestra. Then the most expensive and extravagant conductor (on orchestra time and studio costs)

picked up the baton, in that most ungainly grip, and produced out of that momentary silence the magical sounds of the highly evocative and hushed musical background to Paris — the great city. Programmatic to a degree, but as most Delius-lovers will aver, rather, as in most of his works, the response of Frederick's sensitive mind to the subject than the scene itself.

Here then was being woven the musical fabric of what is still considered today undoubtedly the finest performance of that work. But oh at what pains! Remember that these were the days of wax, before tape came along, and Tommy was so much the perfectionist that side after side was re-recorded. (To interject for a moment, my old chief at EMI once observed how odd it struck him that in these days of progress, electronics, etc. the dominating tool of office in recording studios is a pair of scissors! So much easier has tape made life for the recording-manager and his engineers!)

So the morning plodded on and the orchestra was beginning to tire when, after listening to the last re-take, in his imperious manner, the baton was laid on the music desk. With hands on hips and goatee beard pointed upward to the tired musicians Sir Thomas pronounced "Well, gentlemen, that will do". With a murmur of relief the players began to put away their instruments when Lawrance Collingwood walked out of the cutting room down the length of the No. 1 Studio to Sir Thomas's desk where they both pored over the score. "What was coming?" we all wondered. Then, to everybody's consternation, perfectionist Tommy said to the orchestra, "I'm sorry, gentlemen, but that last side must be done again!" A little wearily, I think, they took out their instruments again, and recorded the whole (78rpm) side again — this, of course, at the risk of having to do further re-takes. What was wrong? Just two bars of the tambourine, either omitted or could not be heard on the wax, which it was unlikely that any member of an audience, on record or in concert, would have noticed! However, thankfully, after tense hearing of the new take, Sir Thomas and Lawrance were satisfied. So Delians can well cherish that very special performance.

An interesting comment was made during a break in the studio restaurant. Chatting with Paul Beard he observed, "Y'know that man" (referring to Sir Thomas) "gets more out of us than any other conductor". Praise indeed!

DELIUS THE SONG-WRITER

SONG RECITAL: DELIUS AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES.

On Thursday, 17th November 1977, members in London were faced with an agonizing choice: whether to go to the Wigmore Hall for the 3rd Violin Sonata played by Menuhin and Feny, or to St. John's,

Smith Square, for *Appalachia*, or to the Purcell Room for Delius songs. Your editor chose the last, for the simple reason of rarity. I felt it a pity that Carole Rosen chose to sing her first group of early Delius songs in their very inadequate English translations (the only songs of the evening not sung in the language in which they were set, incidentally). Whilst they show great interest musically their texts are of a particular character which is very hard to capture in English, and no-one seems to have come near to doing so yet. The more recent Peter Pears version of *Klein Venevil* is not, in the writer's opinion, a patch on the older version (as sung by Carol Leatherby a few weeks later), while the melodic line of *Das Heimkehr* is appreciably altered to its disadvantage in the English version.

This early group of songs was also rather overshadowed by the following group of Grieg settings which, while dating from the same period and in two cases the same pen (Bjørnson), were naturally from a more mature stage in their composer's output. Far more delicate was the next group of Delius songs, four settings of Verlaine, of which *La lune blanche* was the most successful. They were appropriately and interestingly followed by some Debussy settings of Verlaine. After these came the *Four Old English Lyrics* by Delius, in which I felt that the depths of the songs had not been fully plumbed. *To Daffodils*, for instance, a hard song to sing sensibly, was marred by much breathing in inappropriate places. The recital ended with two groups of settings by Peter Warlock, the second of which, *Candlelight, a cycle of nursery Jingles*, was of the kind which causes knowing members of the audience to nudge each other and titter approvingly at the end of each song. I have no idea why.

Miss Rosen has a clear and powerful voice, but throughout the evening I noticed an annoying tendency to carelessly throw away the odd phrase so that even her discreet and experienced accompanist, Paul Hamburger, sounded too loud.

A CONCERT AT THE B.I.R.S.

A recital of songs including 11 by Delius, 3 by John Ireland and a group of 5 Auden settings by Sir Lennox Berkeley was given by Carol Leatherby (mezzocontralto) and Gary Peacock (piano) at the British Institute of Recorded Sound, on the 20th January. The Delius Society had helped in the promotion of the concert by purchasing 40 tickets which were available to members free of charge.

Listening to the Delius songs, I was impressed again by both their beauty and their range of expression. Delius is so frequently criticised for ungrateful vocal writing, yet the songs showed a complete understanding of the capabilities of the human voice and the expressive possibilities of the texts. The John Ireland set was just as fine but it was wise of the performers to dispel the gloom they engendered by

following them with the Berkeley/Auden group. The music here was a perfect complement to the text throughout, but the trouble with songs of "ironic detachment" is that they tend to induce the same attitude in the listener and that is hardly the desired effect!

Miss Leatherby's complete involvement with the music was everywhere evident and the same could be said of Mr. Peacock's beautifully realised accompaniments. Miss Leatherby has a rich voice which has great power where needed. Perhaps *Young Venevil* lost some of its charm when sung with such brio, but we have grown too much used to performances by light soprano voices which merely make the music pretty and reduce the scale and intensity of the settings. Despite Debussy, these are not songs "to lull rich convalescents to sleep".

The attendance was small but I am grateful to all who came from the Society, in some cases travelling a considerable distance. Live recitals are not popular: to be generally acceptable nowadays music has to be embalmed in black vinyl and encased in a cardboard coffin.

John White

DEBUSSY ON DELIUS SONGS

Coincidental with the two recent Delius song recitals comes a book from Secker and Warburg, *Debussy on Music*, by Francois Lesure, translated and annotated by Richard Langham Smith (£6.90). It includes the review which contained the oft-quoted sentence alluded to by Mr. White in the previous paragraph, and here we may read — for the first time for most of us — the whole of Debussy's critique. It was, incidentally, likely to have been his first attempt at musical criticism. Debussy's meaning is, to say the least, obscure, but what does emerge is that it is by no means necessarily as sarcastic as many commentators seem to have assumed. It is also worth noting that he used the same terms, word for word, two years later in reference to a Grieg song! The following translation of the two final paragraphs is not taken from the book mentioned above, but was made specially by the composer Sydney Vale, to whom the Editor expresses his gratitude:

"After this there was not much else to remember apart from the *Poèmes danois* by Fritz Delius: these are very gentle, very white songs, music to rock convalescent women to sleep in the wealthier districts... There is always a note lingering over a chord; rather like, on a lake, a water-lily tired of being looked at by the moon, or perhaps.....a little balloon blocked by the clouds.

It was as ineffable as anything, this music! It was sung by Mlle. C. Andray-Fairfax with a dreamy, melancholically distinguished voice. Mlle. Andray-Fairfax imagined, whilst the music was lamenting itself, a game of comparison between the public and the chandelier, which turned, it has to be said, to the advantage of the chandelier. This

charming game seemed to preserve the delicacy of the melodies from the barbarous noise of the clapping. It is in fact rather odd, this instinctive need, which finds its origin in the Stone Age, to strike one hand against the other, whilst uttering war cries, to manifest our greatest delight...One should not see any critical intention in this remark, nor any pretention of putting humanity on trial; I simply had to end these 'impressions'."

(From *La Revue Blanche*, 1 April, 1901)

ERIC FENBY ON ELGAR

Although it is one of the avowed aims of *The Delius Society Journal* to include summaries of talks given at our meetings, in practice this often turns out to be more difficult to achieve than might at first be thought. In our last issue, for instance, there was simply no room to include any such accounts; and with only four issues a year such news quickly becomes out-of-date, particularly to those overseas members who receive their *Journals* later than members at home. Nevertheless, no apology is needed for including here an account of a talk dating back to 13th June 1977, when a number of Delius Society members helped to swell the Elgar Society's audience to over 100 when Eric Fenby addressed them on "Elgar and Delius". (There is an interesting contrast between the two societies, incidentally: the Elgar Society, which has double our own membership, claims an attendance at London meetings of about one-eighth of its total membership, twice that for Delius Society meetings. On the other hand our AGM regularly attracts ten per cent of our members, while the Elgar Society last year had less than four per cent at its AGM.)

Mr. Fenby began by recalling his introduction to Elgar's music as a boy of 17 in Scarborough, when he was given a miniature score of the *Enigma* variations in return for deputising for a local organist. By the same means he built up a collection of Elgar scores which he took, unknown to Delius, to Grez where they formed his favourite bedtime reading. Delius did not care for Elgar's music: he hated *Gerontius*, found the symphonies boring and disliked the violin concerto. He considered that Elgar's finest works were the *Introduction and Allegro* and *Falstaff*. The former holds a special place in Eric Fenby's affections as it was while attending a pre-war Barbirolli rehearsal of the work that he experienced what mystics term "a moment of illumination". He played the section concerned (part of the exposition of the fugal section), and followed it with a section from *Appalachia* in which Delius came nearest to the same feeling.

Although the two composers had apparently little in common and were not particularly fond of each other (except at their final meeting, when they behaved like "two old croneys"), Mr. Fenby was able to point out some interesting parallels in their music: he played the themes and first two variations of *Enigma* and *Brigg Fair* respectively; the second main themes of *Paris* and *Cockaigne*; and ended with the closing pages of the Requiem and the 2nd Symphony. There was also a very amusing anecdote of Elgar tramping over fields with Edward J. Dent to the local pub to buy some bottles of beer, which he carried home in a sack over his shoulder, with the comment "What would Lady Elgar say if she could see Sir Edward now?!"

Balfour Gardiner Centenary Concert

"Balfour believed.....that music must be an intoxication. He wanted it to carry him out of this world into some world of beauty and power. He used to come up into the organ-loft at Christ Church when I was there and get me to extemporise, constantly urging me on: 'Build it up, Tom, build it up! Let's have a climax now! Build it up! Don't let it relax!' This was always what he felt about music." So spoke Sir Thomas Armstrong in a revealing centenary tribute to his friend, broadcast on Radio 3 on 23rd October 1977. It admirably expressed the feeling encapsulated in the "marvellously effective" anthem *Te lucis ante terminum*, a work which successfully bridges the styles of Parry and Elgar. I remember first hearing this as a boy when my school choir performed it (and some wag translated the opening line as 'Don't light up before the end of term!'), and it has remained an impressive memory.

It was a pleasure, therefore, for me to be able to renew acquaintance with the work, and for many people to be able to put Sir Thomas's words to the test for the first time, when the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestra under John Eliot Gardiner paid tribute to their conductor's great-uncle in a programme of music by him and his contemporaries at St. John's, Smith Square, on Sunday 6th November. *Te lucis ante terminum* was the closing work and it proved far more effective than that other much-acclaimed piece by Gardiner, *News from Whydah*, which opened the programme. Here a balance had not been reached between chorus, orchestra and acoustic. The percussion (placed, as so often, under the balcony — there should be a law against this sort of thing) blazed out, causing the chorus to produce its most strident tones in order to compete, and no-one was the better for it. The programme-note seemed unable to make up its mind whether or not Holst's reduced

orchestration was being used: it certainly was needed. The same thing happened in the solo songs, where David Wilson-Johnson struggled manfully against the conductor's almost Beechamesque disregard for him in songs by Quilter and Bax as well as Gardiner's *The Recruit*. Strain my ears as I did, I still have no idea what this was about. There was also orchestral music by Gardiner: a movement for strings, apparently rescued from an early string quartet, which paid its respects to Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, and a far more impressive tone-poem, *A Berkshire Idyll*, which incredibly was receiving only its second performance. Described by its composer as "full of unexpected harmonies" it began with freshness and originality, but I felt that the harmonies needed to be still more unexpected to sustain interest in the slower passages.

Perhaps it was fitting that the most telling music of the evening came from the pen of the man who Gardiner helped so much, Frederick Delius. An interesting conjunction of *To be Sung of a Summer Night on the Water* and *Summer Night on the River* produced accurate, if not very thrilling, performances, but the rarely-heard *Fantastic Dance* came off beautifully. Of the other music on the programme, Percy Grainger's *Scotch Strathspey and Reel* outstayed its welcome, but *Shallow Brown* was put over magically by Jean Temperley and the choir, while *Brigg Fair*, with the tenor solo sung in authentic style by William Kendall, came close to being the best music of the evening.

Detailed and interestingly-illustrated programme-notes were provided by Stephen Lloyd, whose biography of Balfour Gardiner we eagerly await from Triad Press.

C.W.R.

Delius Society Meeting

Scandal in Christiania: The story of "Folkeraadet".

The Society's meeting on 25th January consisted of a most interesting lecture by Dr. Lionel Carley, who has kindly supplied the following summary:

In 1896, one of Norway's principal dramatists, Gunnar Heiberg (pronounced "hey-berg"), began work on a play that was to develop into a brilliant and wicked satire of the Norwegian parliamentary system and its politicians. Finishing it by the summer of 1897 he asked his friend Delius to write incidental music to it, and the play was given at Christiania Theatre in October and November of that year, running in repertory for several weeks. The two men had decided that three

preludes (to Acts 2, 3 and 5) were needed; in fact Delius added a short overture after arriving in Christiania at about the beginning of October; and there are also a few bars of purely incidental music during the stage action. In its context the music is lively, imaginative and perfectly appropriate to the subject. Its full impact can, however, only be discerned if one is familiar with the theme (and the usual setting) of the Norwegian national anthem, *Ja, vi elsker*, and, to some extent, with the tide of nationalist emotion flowing in Norway towards the close of the old century.

Rumours about the content of the play had spread widely by the first night on 18th October, although in the event it was not the play itself that was to cause all the trouble, but the music. Delius had based his suite on the theme of the national anthem, and the understandably sensitive Christiania audiences of the time were outraged at what they took to be a gross parody of Rikard Nordraak's noble tune. Continuing demonstrations meant that much of the music, in particular the funeral march preceding the last act (*Ja, vi elsker* in a minor key), could scarcely be heard above a continuous barrage of whistles and catcalls, mixed as it was with applause and cheers from the pro-Heiberg and Delius factions. The police began to move in and to extract fines from as many of the offenders as possible; and all the time the debate raged in the columns of Norway's main daily newspapers and even spread abroad. Delius, disillusioned, withdrew his music, but at the end of an extraordinary late-night debate at the Christiania Students Union, a majority of the students in alliance with the city's artists succeeded in getting the music returned to the theatre.

However, after two weeks of performances, and with the music still scarcely making itself heard above the audience's protests, there came an event which must have been unique in Norwegian theatre annals. While the orchestra was struggling to play the funeral march a young man in the front row of the stalls stood up and discharged three blank shots in the direction of the conductor, Per Winge. Hauled away by the ever-present police he received a heavy fine but elected instead to go to prison. Later that week Delius withdrew his music for a second time, having no doubt been made aware of the pressure that the orchestra was now exerting on the management, and left for Denmark. For a time he had been, as Christian Krohg smilingly put it to him, "the most unpopular man in Norway". However he had also been afforded the priceless opportunity to hear his music played — at least in rehearsals — more frequently than ever before. *Folkeraadet* must therefore be seen in this light, and the lessons it contained for Delius the orchestral composer both in its composition and subsequent performance may need to be reassessed.

BOOK REVIEW

Flecker and Delius — the making of Hassan by Dawn Redwood.
Thames Publishing, 14 Barlby Road, London W10 6AR.
103 pages: £5.50.

I love seeing the proofs of forthcoming publications before they appear. There is something of sharing the thrill of the author in seeing someone's brainchild slowly taking shape, without having to share the author's exasperation with his problems. Always the chance, too, that one can assist by picking up a mistake while it can still be rectified. So I was delighted to be asked to read the final proofs of Dawn Redwood's forthcoming book on *Hassan*. A detailed study of the background to a given work is often worthwhile, and in the case of Delius there must be a number of works with which this treatment would reap dividends, of which *A Mass of Life* is the obvious remaining example.

Hassan is dealt with in a basically chronological way. There are six chapters following the story as far as the play is concerned, taking in the Darmstadt production in June 1923, as well as the London one of that Autumn. A feature of this part of the book is the many splendid illustrations. A seventh chapter by Christopher Redwood discusses the music, and three appendices quote English translations of the Darmstadt reviews, and reviews of the London and following American production. A final appendix considers the possible texts of the play in the light of the Leysin typescripts. This book is an extension of two articles from the *Delius Society Journal*, and a talk given to the Delius Society. However, even if it all had previously appeared in the *Journal*, (and it hasn't), to have all the material handily produced in one volume, nicely illustrated and in hard covers, would be most worthwhile.

Chapter 3, on the choice of composer for *Hassan*, is particularly fascinating, and it is a pity that the otherwise excellent footnotes did not expand on the period background when the names Bax and Boughton were mentioned. Basil Dean's recommendation to consider Arnold Bax had surely come about from the success of Bax's music for J. M. Barrie's *The Truth About the Russian Dancers* in 1920. In the case of Boughton, of course, the record-breaking run of *The Immortal Hour*, which started in October 1922, must have been based on some very similar fascination as *Hassan* for its audience. A discussion of the basis of their appeal would be of real value. Thank God, though, that there was never any serious proposal of Boughton to actually write the *Hassan* music!

Finally, in one of those regular features that appear in American record magazines, I noted, last Autumn, that a complete recording of the *Hassan* music was announced for issue this year. Of course, I cannot lay hands on the magazine in question in order to give a proper citation in this review, but can any of our American colleagues give

any information? Could it be that this history will be complemented by a complete recording in the near future? Meantime, get the book, - you will not regret it.

Lewis Foreman

An Advent Concert in Brent

With a youthful, non-professional orchestra, the Brent Youth Symphony Orchestra, John Michael East, the conductor, might have been expected to open the concert on the 29th November, 1977, with a popular overture, but chose instead to begin with Beethoven's 1st Symphony. From the first chords it was apparent that the conductor had established a good rapport with his young musicians, who had previously performed this work under another conductor, with other ideas.

This was followed by the Walton concerto for 'cello and orchestra, with soloist Raphael Wallfisch, who had studied the work in America with Piatigorsky. After the interval, the same soloist played the Kodaly sonata for unaccompanied 'cello, a lovely work, but perhaps more suited to a Wigmore Hall audience.

Delius's *La Calinda* came as a welcome splash of colour and excitement, followed by the *Irmelin* Prelude, and the programme ended with Elgar's *Froissart*. It was good to see the conductor, who is a member of the Delius Society, including such works for his young players. The concert was attended by the Mayor of Brent, and graced by the presence of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Fenby.

Estelle Palmley

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All the above scores are in new condition except *Hassan*, which is slightly soiled. Postage to be paid by buyer.

Apply to: Mrs. N. Barnaby, Penybryn Farm, Craigfechan, Nr. Ruthin, Clwyd, N. Wales.

Correspondence

SONGS OF DELIUS

Dear Sir,

I have just returned from the song recital by Carol Leatherby which included no fewer than eleven Delius songs. I was astonished to find that there were not more than a dozen society members present despite the fact that *free* tickets were offered to more than 100 members in London and the Home Counties.

Among the many requests and enquiries I get in the course of my society activities none occurs more frequently than questions about the songs. But if society members will not even accept the offer of free tickets what is one to think? Can we expect concert promoters to arrange performances of Delius's music unless we can assure them of a reasonable amount of support? Or is it that society members are willing to do anything for Delius — except listen to his music?

Gilbert Parfitt

Orpington

DELIUS AND BRADFORD

Dear Sir,

Bradford University are to be congratulated for naming their new Music Centre after Frederick Delius. One factor in the plan concerns me, and I hope I cause no offence by mentioning it. Since the seating capacity of the concert hall is to be 300, does this not mean that the major choral works of Delius cannot be viably performed there? Is this not therefore a tribute in name only, which precludes the only right and proper tribute to a composer, the performance of his master-works?

David Tall

Leamington

DELIUS'S BIRTHPLACE

Dear Editor,

I am grateful to Mr. Hoare for pointing out the error on p. 20 of my book in *The Great Composer Series*. Unfortunately I did not see a proof of the captions to the pictures. However, I clearly state on p. 13 that No. 6 Claremont was Delius's birthplace. I paid my respects to it two days ago. Correction will be made in a future edition.

Eric Fenby

London N.6

Forthcoming Events

19th April

Royal Festival Hall, London: Sir Charles Groves conducts *A Mass of Life*, with Heather Harper, Helen Watts, Robert Tear and Benjamin Luxon.

6th May at 7.45 p.m.

Guildford Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley at the Civic Hall, Guildford. Double Concerto (Delius) played by Raymond and Robert Cohen, with *The Rite of Spring* (Stravinsky) and Blacher's *Requiem*. Tickets 70p and 80p (unreserved), £1.00, £1.30, £1.50 and £2.00. Advance booking from the Public Library, North St., Guildford (sae) or from 2 p.m. at the Hall.

11th May at 7.00 p.m.

Delius Society Meeting at the British Music Information Centre, Stratford Place (off Oxford St., near Bond St. station). John White, by special request, repeats his talk on *Appalachia*.

13th May at 3.30 p.m.

The Secretary gives notice of the Delius Society AGM and Dinner (7.30 p.m.) at the Paviour's Arms, Page St., London SW1.

13th May at 8 p.m.

At the College of Further Education, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Beauchamp Sinfonietta, conducted by David Tall, plays the unperformed 1890 Suite by Delius, together with a Handel Harp Concerto and an orchestrated version of Mozart's Wind Serenade/String Quintet.

14th May at 8 p.m.

At the Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa: programme as May 13th.

10th June at 8 p.m.

At the Dome, Brighton: Ditchling Choral Society, conductor Janet Canetty-Clarke, with Elizabeth Harwood, Michael Rippon and David Wilson-Johnson. *Sea Drift* (Delius) and *A Sea Symphony* (Vaughan Williams). Tickets, £1, £1.50 and £2, available from Derek Cox at the AGM, from the Ticket Manager, 23 North Court, Hassocks, Sussex from April 10 to May 9, and subsequently from The Dome Box Office, Brighton.

11th June at 3.00 p.m.

Annual visit to Delius's grave at Limpsfield, Sussex, to commemorate the anniversary of his reinterment. Mr. and Mrs Gilbert Parfitt have kindly invited members to tea afterwards. Members wishing to go should write first to Mr Parfitt at the address on Page 1.

26th October at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society Meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, WC1. Speaker: Dr. Eric Fenby.

November 30th at 7.30 p.m.

Delius Society Meeting at Holborn Public Libraries, Theobalds Road, WC1. Christopher Redwood presents a lecture-recital on the Songs of Quilter, Delius and their Contemporaries, with Robert Threlfall (piano).

